

SURVEY OF CITIES BY THE UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE*

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AMONG THE DUTIES imposed upon the Public Health Service by law are: coöperation with state and local authorities in measures for the suppression of disease; the publication of information on the prevalence of disease in the United States and other countries; and, in the field of scientific research, the broad duty of investigating the diseases of man and conditions influencing them, and of publishing the results of such investigations. It is evident that studies of the organization and work of state and local authorities are included in the duties thus defined, both as a necessary adjunct to effective coöperation and as an important item of research in matters affecting the public health. Consequently, with the approval of successive administrations and congresses, the Public Health Service has for many years been actively engaged in studies of this character.

Leaving aside those studies which are concerned more or less directly with special functions of administrative health organizations, as for instance studies of school hygiene, industrial hygiene, malaria control, water supplies, milk supplies, etc., the principal studies referring to state and local organizations as such have been:

1. Compilations and analyses of state laws and regulations pertaining to the organization and duties of state boards of health and to their work in special fields, as in the reporting and control of communicable diseases, the regulation of stream pollution, etc.

2. The current collection and publication of newly enacted state and municipal laws and regulations and of court decisions pertaining to the public health.

3. Surveys of state and municipal health departments, undertaken by special request of the state and local authorities. These surveys which constituted an especially important part in the program of the Public Health Service from 1914 until they were interrupted by the World War in 1917, have not been numerous in proportion to the total number of states and large cities in the country; but they have been sufficient to give a fair picture of typical organizations. They have, moreover, been especially productive of results because they have almost invariably been made with a view to specific recommendations for contemplated reorganization.

4. Studies of rural health organization. These have been pursued chiefly in connection with the actual establishment and operation of county health units, in coöperation with state and local authorities; but their chief purpose has been the study and development of effective organizations and methods.

It has long been evident that in addition to these intensive studies of more or less typical state, municipal and rural organizations, there was need for more comprehensive and systematic, but necessarily less detailed, studies of the status of such organizations in the country as a whole; such a collection and summary of facts as would serve for comparisons between different communities and would indicate the trend and extent of growth

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from year to year or from decade to decade. Therefore, when such a survey of the larger American cities was inaugurated in 1920 by the American Public Health Association through its Committee on Municipal Health Department Practice, it was entirely in accordance with the established policy of the Public Health Service to accede to the request of the committee to assist in the undertaking by assigning several officers of the Service to make certain of the surveys and by publishing the committee's report as *Public Health Bulletin No. 136*.

In 1923 when the American Public Health Association decided, after publication of the committee's report on the first survey, to continue its active interest in the study and development of municipal health department practice, the Public Health Service again readily agreed to enter into coöperative arrangement whereby the work both of the Service and of the Association might be made more effective.

The coöperative agreement with reference to this survey is briefly as follows:

1. That the Public Health Service should establish an organization for the study of health department practice, specifically for making the requisite surveys and for presentation of the facts thus collected to health officers and others interested, through published reports and through special correspondence.

2. That in addition to this the Public Health Service should make the crude data collected available to the American Public Health Association for use in connection with the Association's program for the development of improved municipal health service. Subsequently the data were made similarly available to the other agencies included in the National Health Council for their special purposes.

3. That the American Public Health Association and other agencies represented in the undertaking should assist the Public Health Service in planning its surveys and in preparing the data for publication.

From the standpoint of the Public Health Service this arrangement is distinctly advantageous as assuring to the Service the active interest and coöperation of the health officers of the country whom these organizations represent; also as enlisting the services of a group of able and experienced sanitarians, both in the planning and conduct of surveys and in the laborious work of compiling and preparing for publication the great mass of data collected. From the standpoint of the unofficial agencies which are participating, the coöperation would appear to be advantageous as furnishing them with useful data which could be independently collected only at considerable expense. Finally, from the broader standpoint of the public interest, such coöperation between the Public Health Service and unofficial agencies is distinctly advantageous because it results in more extensive, more thorough and more expeditious work than could be accomplished by the same agencies working altogether independently.

It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss in detail the work which is now in progress under this general plan. Details of its scope and organization and of the progress made have already been given by the officer in immediate charge of the work, in papers presented before this Association in preceding years, and in the annual reports of the Service. All that needs be given here then is a brief review.

As at present organized, the work is under the direction of Surgeon Paul Preble, an officer selected for this duty because of his previous experience, interest and ability in studies of public health organization. His headquarters are for the time being established in Baltimore.

The first work undertaken and which is still in progress, is a study of the organization and activities of municipal health departments and unofficial public health agencies in 100 cities of more than 70,000 population. This group of cities

was chosen because it is in the larger cities that public health functions have been most fully developed and because it is to these that the smaller cities usually look for their guidance; also because it was thought that it would be profitable to supplement the survey of 1920 by a second survey, covering the same cities, to measure progress. Still another consideration was that the American Child Health Association was at the same time beginning a survey of smaller cities on a generally similar plan.

The actual surveys were begun early in 1924, and completed before the end of that year. They have been made in part by Dr. Preble and his staff, but chiefly by other officers of the Service stationed in or near the cities to be surveyed. The schedule used in making these surveys was prepared by Dr. Preble after consultation with the American Public Health Association Committee on Municipal Health Department Practice and other interested agencies, with a view to including in it as much as possible of the special information desired by these agencies for their own special studies.

The data thus collected are being compiled and analyzed by a group of 18 authors, each of whom has undertaken to prepare one or more sections of a comprehensive report. These authors are for the most part representatives of the American Public Health Association and other public health organizations, and are recognized leaders in their respective fields. Arrangements for their collaboration have been made largely through the Committee on Municipal Health Department Practice, which has given active assistance in organization of the work, in enlisting the services of able authors and in providing each of them with a photostat copy of the required sections of the original survey records. This committee has also agreed to assist in the final assembly, review and editing of the various sections.

The service rendered by this group of collaborators who have undertaken such

a laborious task solely because of their interest in the subject is invaluable. Not only does it expedite the publication of a report which would otherwise be several years in preparation, but what is of more importance it brings to the analysis of the data the abilities and experience of a group of authors who are thoroughly representative of the best of public health work in all its phases. It is a pleasure to acknowledge to these authors and to the organizations which they represent the appreciation of the Public Health Service for their generous assistance.

Pending the publication of this report, and supplementing it, Dr. Preble's office is offering a special information service to health officers, furnishing them on request compilations of data which have been prepared but not yet published, or special compilations where these are called for and where they can be made without prohibitive labor and expense. It was believed, when this service was established, that it would be of real value to health officers and others who were interested in the study of municipal health department practice from various angles. It must be admitted, however, that although the offer of this service has been made repeatedly in publications and in circular letters, there has been surprisingly little call for it.

As it is impossible, even in such a comprehensive report as is now being prepared to utilize all of the great mass of data which have been collected, the original records of the surveys have been made available to any of the cooperating agencies which may wish to use them and may be willing to go to the comparatively slight expense of copying or abstracting them from the original records. The American Public Health Association has thus been furnished, at its own expense, with photostat copies of the original survey records for use in connection with its field service and in its program of developing municipal health department practice. It is hoped that in the future

the other agencies which were concerned in the original coöperative agreement will likewise avail themselves fully of the data, either directly from the Public Health Service or from the American Public Health Association, for it is only through analysis and presentation from various points of view that the potential value of the facts can be fully realized.

A complete program of study adequate to furnish the information requisite for progressive improvement of public health practice cannot be limited to broad general surveys. It must include also a proper proportion of more intensive and critical studies, each limited perhaps to a small number of representative organizations or to the more detailed study of one particular function. It must also provide for active coöperation with state and local authorities in the study and solution of their peculiar local problems as they arise. No choice can be made between these several classes of investigation on the basis of their relative importance since

all are necessary in a balanced program. So far as the Public Health Service is concerned, the choice must be determined largely by the extent and kind of work being done by other agencies, the function of the Public Health Service being to furnish the kind of information which is most useful to supplement that which is available from other sources. Therefore, the extent to which the Public Health Service will develop its work in general surveys of municipal, county and state organizations depends entirely upon the demand for this particular kind of information from the sanitarians of the country, as expressed chiefly through the American Public Health Association and other representative organizations having a direct and active interest in the development of public health practice. To the extent that such a demand develops and continues the Public Health Service will endeavor to meet it by adequate extension of the service which has already been established.

Summer Course in Public Health Law—

For the third consecutive year, the summer courses at Columbia University, New York, will include lectures on public health law. These will be given from July 6 to 16 for 1 hour daily from 1 to 2 P.M. These ten exercises will count as 1 point and will cost the student \$10 tuition fee. Persons interested in this and other public health courses at Columbia University this summer should write to the Director of the Summer Session.

Please Mail a Copy to Yourself at Your Home—If you roll your calendar or your mimeographed bulletin or your printed monthly please put yourself on the mailing list. Then when the first copy arrives try to unroll it so that it can be read with ease. Doesn't it look like a fright? I will promise to unroll the stuff but in the process I'll earn all that I get from reading it through in its crooked, twisted form.

E. G. R.

The Under-rested Child—A recent article on the value of sufficient rest for children says there are certain well defined signs of the failure to secure adequate rest and recuperation, namely, failure to gain weight, fatigue posture and irritability.

The author observes that these under-rested children are notoriously irregular in habits of eating, sleeping and elimination. They belong among the cases lumped together under the name of malnutrition. They are responsive to medication, changes of diet, scene and climate, but most of all to an increase of the time allotted to recuperation. In some ways the hardest thing to obtain, rest, is the most fruitful of the means which can be used to build up and restore the frail and irritable child. Failure to obtain sufficient rest in an age so full of shocks and wonders is sufficient explanation for much which passes by the names of malnutrition and nervousness.—*Arch. Pediat.*, Dec., 1925.